

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HIGHER EDUCATION and ENERGY
COMMITTEE
LABOR, WORKFORCE and AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
MINUTES**

A special joint meeting of the Economic Development, Higher Education and Energy Committee and the Labor, Workforce and Affordable Housing Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on May 23, 2006 to discuss the matter of the Capital Budget.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Wayne R. Horsley, Chairman of the Economic Development, Higher Education and Energy Committee

Leg. Kate M. Browning, Chairperson of the Labor, Workforce and Affordable Housing Committee

Leg. Thomas F. Barraga, member of the Economic Development, Higher Education and Energy Committee/Labor, Workforce and Affordable Housing Committee

Leg. Jon Cooper, member of the Economic Development, Higher Education and Energy Committee

Leg. Lynne C. Nowick, member of the Economic Development, Higher

Education and Energy Committee/Labor, Workforce and Affordable Housing Committee

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Ben Zwirn, Assistant Deputy County Executive
Jim Morgo, Director of Economic Development
Marian Zucker, Director of Affordable Housing
Lance Reinheimer, Assistant Director of Budget Review Office
Michael Deering, Director of Environmental Affairs
Charles Stein, Suffolk County Community College
John DeMaio, Suffolk County Community College

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Kraus, Court Stenographer

(THE CAPITAL BUDGET MEETING OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HIGHER EDUCATION AND ENERGY/LABOR, WORKFORCE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMENCED AT 1:16 PM)

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Good afternoon everybody. We'll start our part of this meeting with the Labor committee. And we'll start with the Pledge of Allegiance. Legislator Barraga, please.

(SALUTATION)

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. I know there are supposed to be some other Legislators here but we

will start since the majority of the Labor people are here. Is there anyone here who would like to speak on Labor? The budget? No? Okay. So then we will close this meeting. Do we have to take a motion to close?

LEG. BARRAGA:

I move to close the meeting.

CHAIRMAN BROWNING:

And I second it. So we are closed and we'll wait for the other one.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Good afternoon. Welcome to the Economic Development, Energy and Higher Education budget hearing of 2007 budget. Is there anyone who'd like to be heard on the budget proposals for this year? I don't have any cards so, Mr. Stein.

MR. STEIN:

Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I addressed both public hearings regarding the Capital Program. And I know all the representatives were there, all the Legislators. And I thank you for that opportunity.

I also had the opportunity of reviewing the Budget Review Office analysis relating to the Suffolk County Community College projects. I want to thank Budget Review for the usual fine job that they've done. We agree with most of what they have recommended. We thank them for going through the analysis and recommending that those projects that were not included in the capital project be considered putting back in.

The one area that I just did want to comment on, and I know it's something that was questioned by the Legislators has to do with the athletic fields. We believe that the inclusion of the synthetic turf is something that does save money in the long run. The cost of maintenance is something that has to be taken into consideration. And if there is a resolution to put that back into the Capital Program, I ask that you consider that. The •• I ask that you consider BRO's recommendations for resolutions to included those projects. And we're here to answer any specific questions you may have. So, thank

you.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Thank you very much for your in•depth report back. The issue with the turf field is now •• it is presently not in the county budget but was supported by BRO?

MR. STEIN:

BRO supported it to the extent of basically digging up the fields, re •• providing proper drainage and then re•landscaping to provide for better drainage of the fields, but to utilize plantings of seed and maintenance on an on•going basis. What we're suggesting is that the use of synthetic turf which is something that's being done by colleges and universities all around the country •• I think ••

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

And towns.

MR. STEIN:

Stony Brook is a perfect example of what happened when they converted to the synthetic turf. They're saving a fortune annually. And it's something that we believe is the right way to go in order to save money.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

In the budget it was one point •• what were you asking for synthetic ••

MR. STEIN:

The total •• the total of the project was 2.4 million to cover the three campuses. The Grant Campus is where we have the real major problem with the drainage. And that was a million six, I believe, was the total on that including the synthetic turf. But over the long•term, you basically reduce your maintenance costs down to very little on an annual basis once you have the synthetic turf.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Yeah, I'm very familiar with turf fields. They're big in the Town of Babylon

in many ways. In many different ways. The •• so the •• if this was scaled down in anyway or form to one of the fields, you have a preference just for negotiating purposes?

MR. STEIN:

Well, I think the big problem right now that we're having is at the Grant Campus because the athletic associations refused to allow games on the fields. We have to lease other fields because of the conditions. They just won't permit them. So that's a major thing we have to deal with.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

1.6 is what you said?

MR. STEIN:

It's about •• it's approximately that. The balance was for the •• excuse me •• the Ammerman Campus where we have an irrigation system. It's over 40 years old and constantly being dealt with in terms of breaks and repairs. And we felt it would be appropriate to re•do that.

And the other project as long as we're going into some specifics that I didn't go into detail on, but we really believe it's important to proceed with the equipment for the Culinary Arts Building that is going on the east end. It's a project that will go along with the move to the new building in downtown Riverhead. We already have significant commitments from other parties. It's about •• 61% of the equipment needs have been already committed to by other parties. So what we're requesting here of the county which is \$480,000 of which the county will get back with 150,000 from the state, so this will be a net cost to the county of \$330,000 to outfit that facility. So we urge that that be included in the Capital Program.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Okay. Just •• may I just return for one more question on the turf fields. Often times how we sold the high price tag for turf fields was that there were multiple uses for the fields themselves. Where in the •• for instance, in the Town of Babylon, we were able to put in many more teams and conferences using them and things like that. So where they can use it over a full year's term; not just one season where normally what happens is that

the fields become wrecked during a fall season. And then •• they take all spring to revitalize. And that's the reason why turf fields are economically feasible and sensible.

Is it going to be used full year or what's your plan for the Grant Campus?

MR. STEIN:

Yes, it is used full year. As a matter of fact ••

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

And will anyone else be able to use them?

MR. STEIN:

We are a community college. And the community at large does come to the compass to utilize our facilities. Not the least of which are other athletic organizations that exist in the western part of Suffolk that come to us and request the use of fields. Right now they can't because of the conditions that they're in.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Right.

MR. STEIN:

So it's not just the college teams that will be utilizing these. We have lacrosse, we have softball, we have baseball. These are all organized sports that the college, of course, would utilize it for; but the community as well will be utilizing these fields so it's ••

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

And how does that? Work how does, say ••

MR. STEIN:

It's a scheduling ••

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Let's say if Brentwood soccer, something like that, wanted to use the field on a Friday night or something like that, how would they do that? How

would they request that?

MR. STEIN:

Well, there's a process by which they come to the campus and request the use of the facilities much like their request made to use the health sports and education center, the field house. And it's controlled. We have an individual over there who establishes the schedule, works with the campus for the academic programs, the sports programs; and then utilizes the other dates that are open for the community needs.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Is there a rental for that?

MR. STEIN:

We do have rental fees. In most cases if it's community based, they're very reasonable. And it does provide an area and facility for community use as well as provides some revenue to the college.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Stein. Yes, Ms. Nowick.

LEG. NOWICK:

The 2.3 million is for the entire •• for all the athletics ••

MR. STEIN:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay. And that's just been cut out completely? And what you're saying is •
•

MR. STEIN:

We requested the project. And it was not included. And it was reviewed by the Budget Review Office. And they talk about the conditions of the fields and the importance of dealing with the situation, but what they're recommending is not utilizing the synthetic turf at Brentwood.

LEG. NOWICK:

But isn't there some type of an analysis that would show that you could show or that someone could show to Budget Review the benefits? The economic benefits?

MR. STEIN:

Well, we did provide specific information. And I think Budget Review did not independently •• probably didn't have the time to independently go out and do the analysis. There are savings. And again ••

LEG. NOWICK:

But do you have any idea what kind of savings? In other words, what you're saying is with the athletic fields, if we have the synthetic turf, what kind of savings are there as far as maintenance? Let's assume that we go for the 1.6 if we can get •• because that's your first •• what kind of savings per year per •• and also I see here that without this you're forced to rent athletic fields at other facilities?

MR. STEIN:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

So I would think that there's got to be a cost analysis here.

MR. STEIN:

Well, John DeMaio from our central facilities area is up here and he can comment on the specifics.

MR. DeMAIO:

Hello. John DeMaio with the Community College. The estimates that we got on savings do come from the two areas you described. Not having to rent fields which was approximated at \$15,000 a year. And the maintenance cost that you would not have to incur because you're dealing with a turf and not maintaining grass fields and all that goes into the grass fields, the quotation we got was again from the vendor who is coming forward with the turf fields, but the numbers did seem reasonable based on the size of our fields and how the cost broke down, and that was in the range of between

300 and \$340,000 a year.

LEG. NOWICK:

A year?

MR. DeMAIO:

A year in costs that would not be incurred.

LEG. NOWICK:

Who's the vendor?

MR. DeMAIO:

I don't know if I have the name.

MR. STEIN:

This would have to go out to •• assuming that the capital project is included and everything goes along, we would still have to go out with a bid process.

LEG. NOWICK:

So you mean \$350,000 a year on maintenance for a regular grass seeded field? Is that ••

MR. STEIN:

Multiple fields. There are three fields that are at the Grant Campus.

LEG. NOWICK:

No, but •• okay. But if we're just multiple fields on the Grant Campus; is that what you're saying?

MR. STEIN:

Correct. It's lacrosse and soccer, softball and baseball.

LEG. NOWICK:

And how did it get to this point in such disarray? Just years of use or ••

MR. STEIN:

The •• the fields that exist at this location have a tremendous amount of

clay base. And the cost of properly doing this was one of the items that years ago was not included in the overall health sports and education center, the building that was put up there to try and save some money. So in essence what happened with the field was fences were put up, an infield was made over the dirt that was there, and, you know, grass was planted. And, wella, there's a field. It really significant amount of proper cultivating, drainage. And that wasn't done in order to save money on the building itself. So it's kind of like the old frame oil filter. You pay it now or you pay it later. And we're at a situation right now where we can't use the fields.

LEG. NOWICK:

That's another questions. My colleague would like to know what is the maintenance on the turf field? If one is 350, if you do the three fields with the turf, what's the maintenance? Just watering or •• there's no seeding, right? Wait. It's synthetic. You don't water. It's nothing.

MR. STEIN:

Nothing.

LEG. NOWICK:

So •• yeah, and there's a safety factor also involved, isn't there? With the synthetic fields? Aren't they safer than the grass and the holes and the ••

MR. DeMAIO:

At this point they are safe. I mean way back when, I think we all remember, that there were some athletes injured on the old synthetic turf fields. But the improvements that have been made, the use at other academic institutions, they're working quite well. And injuries are not an issue now with the synthetic turf.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Yeah, they're rubber•based rather than the old astro•turf, I think was the ••

MR. DeMAIO:

Correct.

LEG. NOWICK:

So, maybe Budget Review, you could help. Is there any way we can get that into the budget? The Capital?

MR. REINHEIMER:

Sure, you could put it an amendment to it. Just •• our concern about the cost savings is part of that is the cost for staff. And I'm sure the college would redeploy these people. There's really not a savings in staff. It's opportunity cost. The cost of maintaining a field as opposed to doing something else. We've looked at the statement by the provider that the college referred to. And outside of some materials, you know, we kind of •• we don't buy into that that there would be staff savings because they would use existing staff to maintain them or redeploy them.

MR. STEIN:

Existing staff, however, is used on overtime because we don't have sufficient staff. So, the cost that are incurred to take care of those fields, in fact, would not be incurred.

LEG. BARRAGA:

\$350,000 does that include staff?

MR. STEIN:

I'm not saying that all of that is overtime. Yes, that 350 would include staff.

LEG. BARRAGA:

And is Budget saying that their position is different? The staff would have to •• would still be there even if you had a turf field? You're •• yes.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Yes, that's correct.

LEG. BARRAGA:

So you're not •• so what are you really saving on annual maintenance then?

MR. REINHEIMER:

Well, the college, I guess, contends that they would reduce their overtime.

We haven't seen that •• those figures so we can't comment.

MR. STEIN:

You would also save •• you would also save on the materials and the cost of •• the continuous cost of fertilizing, the grass seed, the ••

LEG. BARRAGA:

Well, do you have to have any specialized talent to take care of a turf field? Do you have to contract out with a separate company to come in? Because I would think it's a lot different than a regular grass field. Does it need any special expertise? Maintenance?

MR. DeMAIO:

To the best of our knowledge, when the field is delivered, there would certainly be a training included on how to help our staff maintain the fields. Could we envision a field being damaged in such a way where you'd want to contract out that particular correction? Sure, I think we could envision that. But on a regular basis, our staff would have to be brought up to speed on how you maintain a rubberized field.

LEG. BARRAGA:

So no outside company would come in on an annual basis to do anything with that turf field? You would think that your own staff would be able to take of it if they're properly trained.

MR. DeMAIO:

Yes.

LEG. BARRAGA:

The thought of \$50,000 right now, how much of that is staff cost?

MR. STEIN:

John will check to see if he has the break•down.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Because that's not going to change from what you're telling me.

MR. STEIN:

Staff costs will be.

LEG. BARRAGA:

All right. I just want to know if the 350 annual maintenance on the grass field, how much of that are employees? It would still be there.

MR. STEIN:

John is checking.

LEG. NOWICK:

And overtime also ••

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

While we're waiting for that answer, could you tell me what teams will be playing? I know you say lacrosse, soccer. Are these intramural teams or are these the sponsored teams that will be playing other schools?

MR. STEIN:

School sponsored teams, National Junior College Athletic Association.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

For both what? Football?

MR. STEIN:

For lacrosse, soccer and baseball.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Baseball? That I haven't seen. You have baseball on a turf field?

MR. STEIN:

You have a regular infield. And you have ••

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

And then the outfield is part of the turf field?

MR. STEIN:

The outfield, yeah.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

I haven't seen that yet, but, okay. I'll take your word for it.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Let me just ask Budget a question then while they're looking up the figure. If your position is that the existing staff would remain in place, of the 350,000, do you have any idea how much the staff costs?

MR. REINHEIMER:

No. The information that we received from college didn't have any detail in it. And that's what we were questioning is that the statement that the college would save on staff and equipment, the college uses equipment for maintenance of the field for other uses in the college for the maintaining of their grounds. Wouldn't, you know, impact the college's equipment. And staff •• the college, as I said, is short staffed. They would redeploy staff. So we don't see any savings in staff unless there is sometimes associated with overtime; but given what I know about the college staffing, they would probably use •• they use their maintenance people on other projects and overtime, too. So we did not assess that. We didn't have that information.

MR. STEIN:

I'm sorry. That information •• John just said before he doesn't have that information. We'll have to get that.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Let me just ask another question. In my former life in the town I dealt with turf fields all the time. My one •• I think we got for 400,000, I think that was underpriced because they wanted to convince people that these are good things. But generally speaking my recollection is they ran be \$600,000 a piece. How did we get to 1.6 million? Do we have lights involved? What are we doing here? That's a big jump.

MR. DeMAIO:

The costs are basically on a square foot basis. And when we add up all of the fields, 34,000 square feet for softball, 72,000 square feet for soccer and lacrosse and 85,000 square feet for baseball, and look at the unit cost, that's how we came up with the estimation. And that was for about 1.5, 1.6 million. And then the other costs were on the other campuses particularly the replacement of the irrigation system at the Ammerman Campus.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Right. I am trying to picture this field. Generally speaking when you build a field, it is the size of a football field, size of a lacrosse field, you're encompassing the outfield of a baseball stadium into this. It sounds like you're just turf fielding a massive piece of property. And I'm not sure •• I'm not sure of how this works.

MR. DeMAIO:

In addition unfortunately in our case to •• the turf, you still have to address the drainage.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Absolutely.

MR. DeMAIO:

But the soil still has to drain.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Absolutely. That's part of it. Oh, no, I understand that.

MR. DeMAIO:

Right. In our instance there ••

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

In our instance it's 600,000 for a football field. Drained. They come in and they maintain it. They •• we have a certain amount of years that are under warranty and stuff like that. The one thing, by the way, that is detrimental,

it could be burnt; but that's besides the point. You're looking for what problems you may have with it. But, I just •• 1.6 million sounds huge and it sounds like you're just doing a big area. I'm confused.

MR. DeMAIO:

Well, we are doing a large area. But I think the drainage problems at this particular site are quite challenging; so much to the point that you have to dig down quite a bit and have quite a complex structure to move the water to an area where it can drain. There's a very large clay layer there in Brentwood. And it makes it very difficult for any fields in the area to drain. And I think that •• I know certainly built into these costs is that consideration that you can't just drop several dry wells in a particular area and cover a large field where certainly here at Ammerman where we don't have a lot of clay, the drainage underneath is much less complex. And that's certainly built into the cost.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Well ••

MR. DeMAIO:

And certainly, we're not locked into any particular vendor. This would be a publically bid project. We would try to get competitive costs in and certainly try to save wherever we could.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Yeah. It's just •• I just know that a football field's in around 600,000. When I hear 1.6 I go, wow, that sounds excessive. And that's soup and nuts.

MR. DeMAIO:

How much is a football field again?

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

600,000.

MR. DeMAIO:

So if you have three football fields ••

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

It may have gone up. I haven't put one up in a couple of years. Maybe it's 700,000, say.

MR. DeMAIO:

But we have three fields.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Okay, so that's what •• these are three separate fields. Maybe that's what I got lost on. Okay.

MR. DeMAIO:

That's correct.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Got it. Okay.

LEG. NOWICK:

If you can just get us the numbers so we have an idea exactly what we can be saving per year taking into consideration the staffing versus the overtime just so we have an idea. Okay?

MR. STEIN:

And supplies and equipment.

MR. DeMAIO:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Gentlemen.

MR. STEIN:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN HORSLEY:

Thank you. Would anyone else like to be heard on the capital budget for Economic Development, etcetera? Nope? Jim? Anyone like to be heard on the budget itself? Well, that will finalize this meeting. It's now 1:35 and thank you for your attendance.

(THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 1:43 PM)

_ _ DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY